

Message Text

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51

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 CU-02 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 A-01 SY-05 OPR-02 SCCT-01 COME-00

EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 /085 W
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R 202213Z JUN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO SESTATE WASHDC 9280
INFO AMCONSUL CALI
AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 5760

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CO
SUBJECT: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

SUMMARY. PUBLIC ATTENTION IN COLOMBIA DURING THE PAST WEEK WAS FOCUSED ON THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN PRESIDENT LOPEZ AND THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY. EARLIER IN THE WEEK FACULTY AND STUDENTS IN EFFECT VETOED LOPEZ'S APPOINTMENT OF AN ACTING RECTOR TO REPLACE LUIS CARLOS PEREZ, WHOM THE PRESIDENT FIRED ON JUNE 3 BUT WHO CONTINUES TO EXERCISE THE OFFICE PENDING HIS REPLACEMENT. THE UNIVERSITY IS PEACEFUL AND CLASSES ARE TO RESUME SHORTLY, BUT A BASIC CONFLICT NOW EXISTS BETWEEN LOPEZ, WHO APPARENTLY INTENDS TO EXERCISE HIS PREROGATIVE OF APPOINTING THE RECTOR, AND THE UNIVERSITY, WHICH VIRTUALLY CLAIMS THE RIGHT TO APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT. THE NEXT MOVE SEEMS TO BE UP TO THE PRESIDENT.

CONCERN OVER SECURITY CONTINUED AS ADDITIONAL VIOLENCE OCCURRED IN THE COUNTRY, INCLUDING DEPARTMENTS WHERE A STATE OF SIEGE HAD NOT BEEN DECLARED. ALTHOUGH THE VIOLENCE WOULD HAVE JUSTIFIED EXTENSION OF THE STATE OF SIEGE TO THOSE DEPARTMENTS, GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN SAID THAT THE

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MOVE HAD NOT BEEN CONSIDERED. THE GOVERNMENT APPEARS

TO BE USING THE THREAT OF A STATE OF SIEGE, AS MUCH AS THE STATE OF SIEGE ITSELF, AS A WEAPON TO INHIBIT AND DISCOURAGE VIOLENCE. THIS TACTIC HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY SUCCESSFUL SO FAR IN BOGOTA, BUT NOT IN OTHER LOCATIONS. THERE IS AMONG MANY THE EXPECTATION THAT THE GOVERNMENT, HAVING ALREADY PROCLAIMED A STATE OF SIEGE IN THREE DEPARTMENTS, WILL BE PUSHED BY FURTHER VIOLENCE AND CONCERN OVER SECURITY TO EXTEND THE STATE OF SIEGE. END SUMMARY

2. VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA CONTINUES: GOC DOES NOT EXTEND STATE OF SIEGE. THE COLOMBIAN NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL MET JUNE 19 TO CONSIDER THE SECURITY SITUATION THROUGHOUT COLOMBIA. FOLLOWING THE MEETING MINISTER OF GOVERNMENT REYES SAID THAT THE GOC HAD NOT CONSIDERED EXTENDING THE STATE OF SIEGE AND CLAIMED THAT SECURITY FORCES HAD THE SITUATION UNDER CONTROL. IN CALDAS MENAWHILE, WHERE IN LA DORADA VIOLENCE ERUPTED THE PREVIOUS WEEK, CITIZEN AND ABUSINESS GROUPS BY MID-WEEK WERE PUBLICLY CALLING FOR THE IMPOSITION OF THE STATE OF SIEGE. IN CAUCA, VIOLENT PROTESTS BROKE OUT IN THREE TOWNS, JUNE 18 AND 19. CUASES OF THE VIOLENCE VARIED: A PROTEST AGAINST A TOWN MAYOR, A DEMONSTRATION BY TEACHERS AND STUDENTS PROTESTING SEVERAL MONTHS FAILURE TO PAY TEACHERS AND AN INTERNAL LIBERAL PARTY STRUGGLE. MEDELLIN HAD A SMALL DEMONSTRATION JUNE 19 DESCRIBED BY THE PRESS AS A STUDENT EFFORT TO TEST THE STATE OF SIEGE IN ANTIOQUIA, AND IN TUNJA BOYACA THE SAME DAY ONE STUDENT WAS SERIOUSLY WOUNDED IN A UNIVERSITY STUDENT-SECURITY FORCES CONFRONTATION.

3. IN ADDITION, THE COLOMBIAN PUBLIC WAS FACED THIS WEEK WITH REPORTS OF A NSI WAVE OF KIDNAPPINGS. AT LEAST FOUR PERSONS, IN VARIOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY WERE REPORTED KIDNAPPED DURING THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS. RANSOM APPEARED TO BE THE MOTIVE IN ALL CASES.

4. NATIONAL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS REMAIN PACPVIC. PERHAPS THE GOC WAS ENCOURAGED BY THE FAILURE OF VIOLENCE TO BREAK OUT IN BOGOTA, ALTHOUGH THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY AND THE GOC REMAINED AT AN IMPASSE. STUDENTS CONTINUED ON STRIKE AND STAGED A PEACEFUL MARCH IN DOWNTOWN BOGOTA JUNE 19. MEANWHILE, THE UNIVERSITY FACULTY AND STUDENTS REJECTED PRESIDENT LOPEZ'S APPOINTMENT

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OF A NEW RECTOR TO REPLACE LUIS CARLOS PEREZ. THE NOMINEE, HERNAN VIECO WHO HAD ACCEPTED THE POSITION ON THE CONDITION THAT HE WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO THESE GROUPS, SUBSEQUENTLY REJECTED THE POST. IN ADDITION, THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL REQUESTED PRES LOPEZ TO LEAVE TO THE UNIVERSITY THE NAMING OF A NEW RECTOR, WHICH THE PRES IN TURN REJECTED IN A STRONGLY-WORDED LETTER, THUS SETTING THE STAGE FOR A POSSIBLE SHOWDOWN. THIS HAS NOT YET OCCURRED, HOW-

EVER BY WEEKS END IT WAS WIDELY EXPECTED THAT THE STUDENTS WOULD RETURN TO CLASSES EARLY NEXT WEEK.

5. CEMENT WORKERS STRIKE APPEARS TO BE OVER. THE GOC ALSO MAY HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED BY THE APPARENT APPROACHING RESOLUTION OF THE STRIKE IN THE CEMENT INDUSTRY, WHICH HAS LASTED OVER 40 DAYS AND HAD IDLED MUCH OF THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY DURING THE LAST SEVERAL DAYS. FOLLOWING THE DECISION OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOR TO INVOKE COMPULSORY ARBITRATION TO SETTLE THE RARELY NATIONWIDE DISPUTE, THE COMMUNIST-LED TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION OF COLOMBIAN WORKERS (IATC) AND ITS CEMENT WORKERS AFFILIATE AT FIRST INDICATED THAT THEY WOULD NOT ABIDE BY THE DECISION OF THE ARBITERS

AND THREATENED TO PROLONG THE STRIKE, WHICH WOULD THEN HAVE BEEN ILLEGAL. NEVERTHELESS, AFTER THIS INITIAL DISPLAY OF RESISTENCE, INDIVIDUAL CEMENT PLANT UNIONS BEGAN TO AGREE TO NEW CONTRACTS, MOSTLY ALONG THE LINES OFFERED BY THE COMPANIES BEFORE THE STRIKES BEGAN. WAGE INCREASES WERE SLIGHTLY MORE THAN THOSE OBTAINED IN NEGOTIATIONS IN OTHER INDUSTRIES, APPROXIMATELY 27 PERCENT, BUT WITHIN GOC GUIDELINES ESTABLISHED EARLIER IN THE YEAR THROUGH TEACHER SALARY INCREASES. THE SETTLEMENTS ALSO APPEARED TO DEFEAT FOR THE TIME BEING THE CSTC'S ATTEMPT TO GET A DE FACTO INDUSTRY-WIDE CONTRACT, WHICH WOULD HAVE BEEN A MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH IN COLOMBIAN LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS. EARLY REPORTS INDICATE THAT THE VARIOUS TWO-YEAR CONTRACT AGREEMENTS INCLUDE CONSIDERABLE VARIATIONS IN FRINGE BENEFITS AND IN THE DATES OF CONTRACT EXPIRATIONS, WITH SOME RETROACTIVE TO JAN 1, 1975 AND OTHERS WITH LATER DATES.

WHITE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SUMMARIES, CIVIL DISORDERS, LABOR STRIKES, UNIVERSITIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 JUN 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975BOGOTA05760
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750218-0065
From: BOGOTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750627/aaaaaymq.tel
Line Count: 145
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 SEP 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <05 SEP 2003 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <17 NOV 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA SUMMARY. PUBLIC ATTENTION IN COLOMBIA DURING THE PAST WEEK
TAGS: PINT, PINS, SEDU, ELAB, CO, (LOPEZ MICHAELSON, ALFONSO), (PEREZ, LUIS CARLOS)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006